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ABSTRACT

in this era of standards, high-stakes testing, and accountability, school leaders need to know how they can increase the achievement of their students. Researchers have found that high-achieving schools show common, key factors, including challenging learning experiences for all students, a principal who fulfills his/her role as the instructional leader, the use of data to assess and make improvements in the instructional programs, an emphasis on curricular coherence, and a belief that all students can excel. The use of targeted data helps in determining where a school is succeeding and where it needs to improve. Research shows that successful schools share a four-step reform process involving a needs assessment and goal-setting phase, a planning phase, an implementation phase, and a period of assessment and evaluation. Additional key factors for success include fostering clear and continuous communication among school leaders, teachers, students, and parents; being clear about what it means to set high standards for all students and what it will take to meet them; and showing how new ideas enhance, rather than replace, the old ones. Although each school follows its own path to success, all focus on student achievement as the end goal. (Contains 40 references.) (RT)

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